The American Academy

Together, let's do something about it.™

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Supporting Dropout Recovery Programs

The purpose of this legislation is to create a framework for dropout recovery programs that provides school districts with the flexibility required to effectively serve students who, for a variety of reasons, have already dropped out or who are at-risk of dropping out of school. Included in HB 5267/SB 969 are accountability measures designed to ensure that funding is available based on measurable student performance.

Today, more than 150,000 high school-age Michigan teens have left school without earning a diploma. Research shows that as many as 80% of the kids who leave school leave for non-academic reasons: they leave because they must work to support themselves or their families, they have become parents and don't have child care options, they've been bullied, they are "too far behind" to graduate on time and have been counseled out of school, they've been asked to leave because of gang involvement or other disruptive behavior. They simply cannot or will not attend traditional facility-based programs.

Dropouts understand the importance of a high school diploma. In our experience, more than 90% of the students The American Academy (TAA) is able to find on behalf of partner district re-enroll in their home district when they are offered a program that gives them the flexibility to balance the demands of their lives with the demands of their education. HB 5267/SB 969 establishes a seat-time waiver for returning dropouts and creates monthly entry points that allow students to come back to school when they are ready.

Simply giving students a username and password is not an effective dropout recovery practice. In a 2009 report commissioned by the Texas Education Agency on effective dropout recovery practices, 22 categories of effective practice were identified. These practices focus on program administration, student recruiting, academic strategies, college/career strategies, and mentoring and coaching. Online learning can be an effective academic strategy for dropout recovery, but *only* when it is offered in a context of the other practices, including robust accountability and support. HB 5267/SB 969 enables districts to offer flexible dropout recovery programs - alone or in partnership with dropout recovery organizations – and requires dropout recovery programs to align with national best-practices that are critical for student success.

Education is a significant economic driver. According to the Alliance for Excellent Education, an additional 1,000 graduates in Michigan could contribute $1.2MM *annually* to the state budget. Compare this economic boost to the average dropout who costs the state $300,000 in social services, incarceration, and lost income from taxes over his or her lifetime.

Funding success. In this time of economic crisis, allocating funding to new programs with increased accountability and pay-for-performance requirements is wise financial management. HB 5267/SB 969 divides public education funding into twelve equal tranches. In this model, districts receive payment only for the months in which students are active in the program and meet the requirements for funding.

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HB 5267/SB 969:

• Allows school districts to directly work with a dropout recovery expert organization.

• Defines "dropout recovery program" to include all effective formats- including online, brick-and-mortar, and hybrid programs in the definition.

• Ties funding of dropout recovery programs to monthly performance rather than October and February count periods.

• Creates 12 monthly enrollment periods to allow students to resume their education when they are ready.

• Requires dropout recovery programs to follow nationally-accepted, research-based best practices rather than focusing exclusively on best practices in pure distance learning, including requiring annual learning plans, provision of a local mentor who provides social advocacy, and monthly evaluations of student progress.

The American Academy:

• Currently works with Michigan school districts to give dropouts and other at-risk students within the district the flexibility, accountability, and support needed to get back in school and back on track to graduate.

• Partners with local MI districts in a budget-neutral manner and doesn't take money away from other programs or students.

• Provides certified teachers, experienced administrators, local student advocates, online mentors, and online tutors available 24x7, to support students as they work through online curriculum aligned to Michigan Merit standards.

• Follows nationally-accepted research-based best practices in dropout recovery by partnering with local school districts and providing a combination of academic and social supports for returning dropouts.

NoDropouts: Michigan Student Successes

Most dropouts don't quit school because of poor grades, they leave because circumstances have forced their educations to become a lower priority in their lives. But in more than 55 districts across the United States, including Michigan, school leaders have implemented NoDropouts programs to give students the flexibility and support they need to return to their studies. **Here are some of their stories . . .**

Their challenges are great — and so is their determination to succeed.

Okemos Public Schools

School leaders had no choice but to expel Troy when he brought a knife to school. But they also wanted to make sure that one mistake didn't haunt the troubled student forever. They gave him the option of continuing his education in a NoDropouts program — and that gave Troy an opportunity to prove he was ready and worthy to return to his high school. Four months later, that's what happened.

Troy School District

Mary was a good student — but her mother was very sick. So in the fall of 2011, Mary made the difficult choice to leave school to care full-time for her mother.

District leaders admired Mary's selflessness, but they knew she needed a path to graduation, so they arranged for her to continue her studies through a NoDropouts program.

Today, Mary is one of the most prolific and successful NoDropouts students nationwide.

Bloomingdale Public Schools

Kayla was only a freshman when the bullying began — and the thought of enduring four years of taunting, teasing and physical threats was too much for her to bear, so she dropped out.

Even though district leaders were working hard to ensure that their schools were safe and comfortable places for all students, they realized that they couldn't be everywhere at once. Today, Kayla is back in school and on track to graduate.

Southfield Public Schools

Shalana's severe anxiety disorder materialized shortly after her mother's death. She wanted to attend school, but even the thought of going to class sent her into a panic.

School leaders wanted to ensure that students suffering from health issues that prevented regular attendance could still succeed. And that's exactly what Shalana is doing.
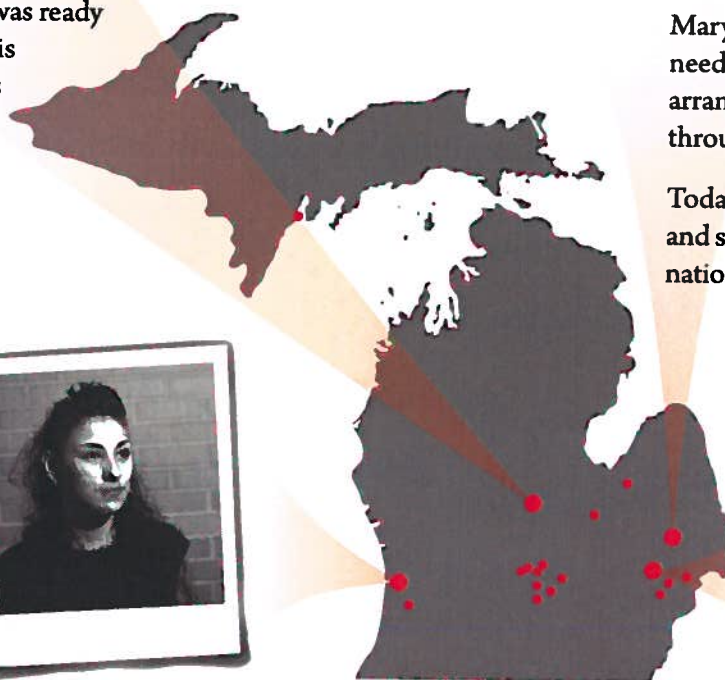
NoDropouts
Recover what's been lost

Contact us: Want to learn more about how school leaders nationwide have implemented NoDropouts programs to turn dropouts into diploma holders? Visit **NoDropouts.com/stories,** call us at **855-NODROPOUTS** or e-mail **info@NoDropouts.com**

Do you know a Troy? A Kayla? A Shalana? A Mary? We can help you help them.
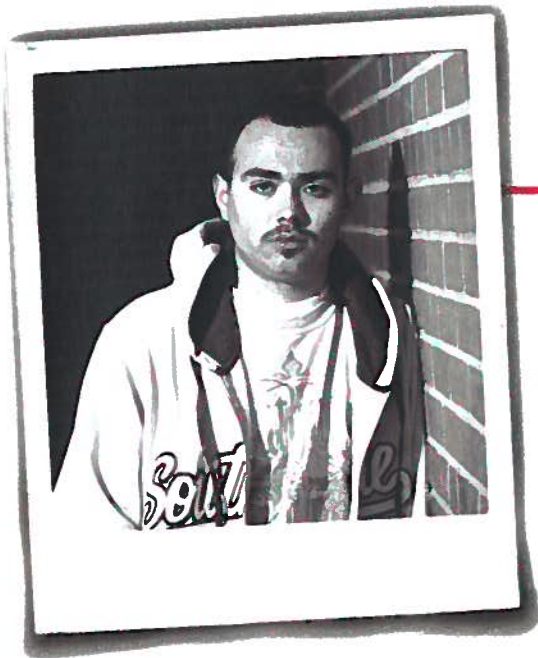
Troy
Okemos Public Schools

Troy knew he'd messed up.

District guidelines strictly prohibited weapons on campus. In bringing a knife to school, Troy had broken a "zero tolerance" rule.

"I got expelled," the high school sophomore said. "Pretty much there was nothing I could do about it. And at that point, I really didn't know what I was going to do."

School leaders from Okemos Public Schools needed to enforce the rules, but they also wanted to make sure Troy had every opportunity to finish his high school education. That's one of the many reasons they launched a NoDropouts program.

After four months of hard work, Troy had earned more than three academic credits — keeping him on pace to stay with his cohort. With the support of NoDropouts teachers, mentors and local advocates, Troy applied for re-admission to his school and was accepted.

Troy's mother said her son "is very excited to be back with his peers."

And Troy said he has newfound appreciation for the privilege of attending school.

"I feel lucky," he said. "It turned out pretty well."

NoDropouts
Recover what's been lost

Do you know a Troy? We can help you help him.

Shalana
Southfield Public Schools

When she is confronted by new people and new situations, Shalana often breaks down. Her heart races. She feels frightened. And that's made it impossible for her to attend a traditional high school.

Shalana doesn't know why she suffers from severe social anxiety disorder, which began to materialize following her mother's death last year.

"I wanted to go to school — I really did. But just thinking about being around other kids — I don't know why — but I end up having a panic attack," she said.

And so she just stopped going to school.

Wanting to do more to serve students pushed out of school by medical and mental health issues — as well as those who have left because of discipline issues, parenting responsibilities and economic hardship — school leaders from Southfield Public Schools launched a NoDropouts program.

Today, Shalana is back on the path to her high school diploma.

"It's still hard for me to be around new people, but I'm feeling more and more confident," she said. "It's my goal to go to college. I know there are a lot of steps I've got to take to get there. But I really do believe I'm going to get there."

NoDropouts
Recover what's been lost

Do you know a Shalana? We can help you help her.

Ashley
Bloomingdale School District

Ashley didn't want to drop out of school. But the teen mom was struggling to keep up with her studies while caring for her baby.

Just weeks into her senior year, she was already so far behind that graduating on time seemed impossible.

Then the phone rang.

As Ashley was fighting to be a good mom and a good student, officials from Michigan's Bloomingdale School District had been fighting to find ways to support students like her while dealing with the challenges of the worst budget environment in decades. In the fall of 2009, the district implemented a NoDropouts program. For Ashley, it was a lifeline: The online program allowed her to continue pursuing her high school diploma while giving her the freedom to continue caring for her son.

She enrolled immediately.

"The difference is that I can do the work on my own time so that I can continue taking care of my son," she said. "I feel more motivated now . . . and I'm even getting better grades."

NoDropouts
Recover what's been lost

Do you know an Ashley? We can help you help her.

Kayla
Bloomingdale Public Schools

Kids can be cruel. And to Kayla, they were exceptionally cruel.

"Sometimes they would try to trip me in the halls," the 15-year-old Bloomington Public Schools student recalled of the bullying she suffered at her public high school. "And they'd always call me names and make fun of me because I cared about school and wanted to get good grades."

She was only a freshman. The very idea of having to run the gauntlet of taunts and physical threats for three more years made her cry.

"Every day, I just had so much anxiety about going to school," she said. "It made me sick."

Bloomingdale School District officials work hard to make their schools safe and comfortable places for their students. But they also realize that they can't be everywhere at once.

That's one of the many reasons they implemented a NoDropouts program.

Kayla had always been a good student, but her absences and anxiety had left her far behind in her studies.

"Once I started going to school online, though, I was really able to just focus on my school work," she said. "Now I don't have to deal with the people who were so hurtful to me... I'm almost caught up now. And I know I'm going to graduate on time."

NoDropouts
Recover what's been lost

Do you know a Kayla? We can help you help her.